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AN

AFFECTIONATE ADDRESS

TO THE

KING AND HIS GOVERNMENT.

BY

THOMAS SHILLITOE.

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AN
AFFECTIONATE ADDRESS, &c.

MAY IT PLEASE THE KING

To receive the respectful and affectionate address of one of his subjects, whose mind has of later times, been deeply impressed with sincere desires for His welfare, and that of His Royal Consort and native country, accompanied with fervent prayer to Almighty God that we may, as a nation, at this awfully awakening crisis, manifest an entire willingness, through God's all-sufficient help, "to break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of our tranquillity." (Dan. iv. 27.) But if this change is thus happily brought about in our land, it has long been given me to see that in the onset it must become a *Government* work ; may I therefore be allowed to say, not only to the King, but to all those who hold the reins of government under him, that there must be an entire willingness manifested on your part, through the help of Almighty God, to remove out of the way of the people those temptations to evil which by licence, and by your not controlling them, are sanctioned by your authority.

If this reformation goes forward, and becomes more and more

an individual work, you must be willing, O ! ye Rulers, to stand forward unshackled by the fear or favour of man, and thus to show yourselves to be on the Lord's side. I am aware this will be no easy task which you are loudly called upon to perform, and that you will have much discouragement to contend with, both from within and from without ; but then it will be the more necessary for you to endeavour to keep in view, that the Master whom you will thus serve is " the Lord on high, who is mightier than the noise of many waters ; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea ;" and that if He be for you and work with you, and you with Him, through His divine aid, who is there that shall oppose you and prevail ?

Permit me to remind you, that, by merely appointing a fast for a day, we cannot find acceptance with God, appease his displeasure, and cause Him to withhold his just judgments from us, as we have sufficiently proved ; for since that day has passed over, the threatenings have yet been more awful. The impending calamity, the disease which has baffled the skill of medical aid to fathom its origin, has from time to time made its terrific appearance in other parts of our nation, and spread its deadly influence amongst the inhabitants ; allowing such who have fallen victims to its unparalleled force but very little time for that necessary preparation of soul which we all must experience before we leave this world, if we are favoured to live with God and Christ Jesus in a happy eternity. Have we not then reason to fear, that because of our national and individual transgressions, the spirit of the Lord is daily grieved, and that this language of the psalmist (Ps. vii. 12,) may be applied in this our awful situation : " If he turn not he will whet his sword, he hath bent his bow, and made it ready ;" and yet how have these threatenings of this awful disease, which has so partially visited our land, been permitted, from time to time, in degree to subside ; as if we were, as a nation, to be excused from the severe stroke from the rod thus shaken over us, which has fallen to the lot of

other nations. But the partial subsiding of this disease, which has taken place in different parts of the nation, I have been led to view as permitted in great mercy to us, by Him who remains to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. If we will hear his voice, and receive his counsel and obey it, it seems to proclaim in our ears, as a nation, this language—if ye will now “repent and do your first works,” by “breaking off from your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor,” the deadly potion which your manifold sins and accumulated transgressions have merited, shall not be meted out to the full. But unless we are willing, through God’s help, to “repent and do our first works,” I dare do no other than say, that I greatly fear we shall not be spared more than other nations have been.

Should the Almighty see meet thus to chasten us, as with scorpions, and “rebuke us in his hot displeasure:” should the destroying angel be commissioned to smite our nation, you who hold the reins of government will be no more secure in your costly dwellings, from the awful desolation it may occasion, than the poorest cottager; the Almighty power not being confined to place or space, agreeably to the language of the Psalmist, (Ps. cxxxix. 7.) “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me; if I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me; yea the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.” Therefore, whilst time and opportunity are afforded, let us be willing, through God’s all-sufficient help, to amend our ways; for should the Lord’s judgments be meted out to us as they have been to other nations, which of us can

assure ourselves that we shall be spared to witness the awful desolation and thinning of the people which it may occasion? But O! how have I been comforted at times, when my mind has been under the pressure of these subjects, in the belief that Divine mercy and all-sufficient help still await our acceptance as a nation, and as individuals; and in believing that the language of the Almighty, through one of the prophets of old, to a highly favoured, yet rebellious people as we have been, and yet are, is still continued to us. Hosea, xi. 8, 9. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of my anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city."

If we thus become the objects of Divine mercy and loving kindness, let me again say to you, who hold the reins of government, in whom the power is vested, to do much towards bringing about this reformation, which the Lord calls for from us as a nation, you must manifest an unreserved willingness to come forward and do your part towards it, by removing the cause of the evils which abound, and are increasing amongst us; by no longer giving occasion for it to be said, "The leaders of the people cause them to err." I am persuaded that a blessing would attend your recalling all licences that have been issued which allow of theatres, opera-houses, and all other places of vain amusement in the nation, and your prohibiting all such licences in future, and enacting such laws as shall prevent horse-races, bull and bear-baiting, cock-fighting, gambling-houses, &c. &c. as you would be thus found so far doing your part towards removing the temptations out of the way of the people, which are thereby held out to them to frequent such nurseries of vice.

Another enormous evil in which this nation is deeply implicated, is that of slavery. Nobly resolve, O ! ye Rulers, immediately to abolish this iniquity in all our dominions, that the cries of the poor, injured, and deeply afflicted Africans may no longer be permitted to ascend to the ear of their God and our God, against our guilty nation ; for He will most assuredly, either in time or eternity, punish their oppressors, and such as are upholding them in the continuance of this oppression, unless they timely repent of the sufferings and cruel bondage which our highly professing nation has long sanctioned, by allowing them to become a sacrifice to the merciless interest of their owners. It has also appeared to me, that you must endeavour, through your own good example, to effect such an observance of the first day of the week (called Sunday,) as will be acceptable to Almighty God ; then you may hope for Divine direction and support in using those means you are called upon to do as rulers of the people, by enforcing those good and wholesome laws which, through the aid of Divine Providence, our legislators have been enabled to enact upon the subject.

Thus the language of the Most High, through his prophet, will be fulfilled in our blessed experience as a nation. (Isaiah, lviii. 13, 14.) “ If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father ; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Let us remember, that throughout the sacred records the profanation of the sabbath was a prominent feature in the complaints brought forth by the Most High, through his prophets, against those nations which he visited with his sore judgments.

But if this happy change is effected, there must be, in the first place, a total prohibition of an evil practice which has been allowed to take place in this nation within my memory, on the day called Sunday, a practice which I have, from its commencement, viewed as a grievous national profanation of the sabbath, that of the sale and delivery of what are called Sunday newspapers, the reading of which I am persuaded must have a tendency, in degree, to demoralise the minds of such as indulge themselves in it, and unfit them for that proper observance of the day which the Lord calls for from his dependent creature, man. Oh! how have I mourned, at times, on account of those in authority, who are sanctioning this grievous profanation of the Sabbath, by not exerting that power you are vested with, which is amply sufficient to prevent this notorious reproachful practice, in a highly professing Christian nation: for it is a solemn consideration, that you will one day have to account to God for your conduct, how far you have been endeavouring, through His aid, which awaits the acceptance of the whole human race, to be found in the awfully responsible situation He has permitted you to take in the government; in all things, and on all occasions, aiming to please God and not to gratify the corrupt inclinations of men. Remember, I beseech you, that power is vested in you to prevent these evil practices which are increasing amongst us; for how do I behold with sorrow of heart, on the morning of the day called Sunday, the busy deliverers of these newspapers hastening from house to house, to put the inconsiderate purchasers of them as early as possible in possession of their fatal contents; fatal, because such as willingly venture into this trap of the devil, which he has prepared in order to divert the minds of the people from God, are in a greater or less degree thereby unfitted for a correct, faithful discharge of the duties of the day.

How lamentable is it to observe on this day also, how

much the practice is increasing, of persons travelling by stage-coaches, who are busily employed in reading these papers, and, through your neglect, thus profaning the Sabbath, instead of keeping it "holy to the Lord." For if you do not exert your authority to the utmost, to prevent or remove these evils, you sanction them; and thus, it has long been my belief, that in the sight of Almighty God, you become implicated in all the evil consequences resulting from their continuance. So consider, I entreat you, as you value the eternal well being of your own souls, and the souls of the people, the awful situation you are placing yourselves in, and those who are ensnared by their continuance, so long as you allow those evils in the nation which are within your province to remove. Be willing then to do your part, through God's help, to have these things removed.

In my early life the practice of reading a newspaper on the day called Sunday, was considered by those who made a profession of religion, as highly reprehensible; but, alas! how in this day are we as a nation degenerated in this and other respects; and how applicable has become the language of the prophet to our mournful situation: (Jer. vi. 15,) "Were they ashamed when they had committed abominations? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall amongst them that fall; at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord."

The opening of *news-rooms*, in different parts of this nation, on the day called Sunday, is another evil that must claim your vigorous exertions to put a stop to; as also the manner in which the day is profaned in London and its neighbourhood, by the stage-coaches travelling the whole of the day, from London to the villages round, and not confined to morning and evening, as was much the case a few years ago, greatly to the quiet of the city and villages. And suffer me to query

with you, is not something called for at your hands, in order effectually to urge the necessity, on the part of those who employ the poor, to pay them their earnings at such an early hour on the seventh day, called Saturday, as may do away with the necessity for the shopkeepers opening their shops on the morning of the day called Sunday, to supply the labouring class of the people with the necessaries of life, which is in part occasioned by their not receiving their wages until a late hour the night before, and, in some instances, not until what is called Sunday morning. A care of this sort would facilitate a better attendance of both the shopkeeper and the poor at a place of religious worship, and do much towards a more quiet observance of the Sabbath day.

And may I earnestly entreat you, O ! ye Rulers, no longer to suffer the temptations to exist which have produced that unparalleled increase of the sin of drunkenness, which has of late years taken place in our nation, from the reducing of the duty on ardent spirits, and which has so demoralized the minds and manners of the people, in youth, middle life, and old age. Oh ! the drunkenness, poverty, starvation, and misery which this reduction of the duty on ardent spirits has entailed on our nation ! The load of national guilt that has been accumulated by this means is incalculable. In addition to this sin of drunkenness, there is another evil attendant upon the increased distillation of ardent spirits, which is, the great destruction of that valuable grain which a beneficent Creator has in his mercy bestowed upon us for our support, whilst many of the poor are suffering for want of sufficient food. If this alarming waste is suffered to continue, can we look for any other consequences than that of calamitous national want ? Therefore be willing now, even now, to do your part toward preventing an accumulation of our national guilt, that you may no longer become sharers therein ; but by increasing the duty on this baneful article, may prevent the use of it, except in

cases of real necessity, and only to be dispensed by medical practitioners.

As guardians of the people, and as magistrates, in your various districts, exert your authority all in your power, that drunkenness in public-houses be prevented, and that none be allowed to sit in those houses on the day called Sunday, except such as are travellers. A care of this sort will tend much to better the condition of the poor, and be one means of drawing down a blessing from heaven on yourselves, by your manifesting a decided determination to be found judging and acting righteously in the sight of God; that so the day called Sunday may become a Sabbath day, a day of rest; one in which, with the exception of such acts of necessity as may be compared to rescuing a "sheep fallen into a ditch," the concerns of this life should unreservedly give place to more important duties.

By your thus doing your part (but nothing short of it) towards the general reformation which the Lord is expecting from us as a nation, it would indeed be "an acceptable day to the Lord," a fast he would be well pleased with; and it would, I believe, be an offering he would condescend to accept at our hands. I would not have it concluded, from what I have said in favour of setting apart one day in the week more especially for religious purposes, that I place so much stress upon it as to think the attending on public worship, on *one* day, will make amends for the misconduct of other days; or that the observance of any rites or ceremonies will be available to obtain the favour of heaven, whilst we remain in a state of transgression, and are violating the righteous law of God written in our hearts.

Although I have no hesitation in believing, that the day recently set apart professedly as a day of fasting and humiliation, was devoutly observed by many pious individuals in the

nation, yet so long as the evils I have enumerated are countenanced by our government, whether by licence, or they are suffered to go on uncontrolled, and pride and luxury continue to abound, I very much fear the language of the Most High, through his prophet, will stand against us as a nation, should the day of the Lord's judgment be yet more awfully revealed, and then what will a national decree for a fast, *one* day of humiliation, avail, consider ye! (Isaiah, i. 12, 13, 15, 16.) "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." And again, (Isaiah, lviii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.) "Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor which are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am."

Every act on our part, as a nation, short of this, I dare do no other than say, we have abundant cause to fear will be but

offering an insult to the majesty of Heaven, and adding to our national guilt. Suffer me, therefore, to quote the language of the psalmist, (Ps. ii. 10, 11, 12,) "Be wise therefore, O! ye kings; be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him;" and allow me to add, that my soul craves that by observing the fast recommended by the prophet, which we are assured the Lord will accept, we may be enabled, both in a national and individual capacity, to say: (Ps. lxi. 20,) "Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."

THOMAS SHILLITOE.

Tottenham, 7th of Ninth Mo. 1832.

THE END.





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An affectionate address to the King

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